DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 333 896 IR 053 658

AUTHOR Chressanthis, June
TITLE What's Up Doc?: Communicating to the Staff about the Reclass Project.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 13p.; Poster session presented at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association (Chicago, IL, June 23, 1990), and the Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Library Association (Jackson, MS, November 7, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classification; College Libraries; *Communication Problems; Higher Education; *Library Personnel; *Library Technical Processes; *Organizational Communication
IDENTIFIERS Dewey Decimal Classification; Examples; Library of Congress Classification; Library Policy; Library Procedures; *Mississippi State University

ABSTRACT

When the Mississippi State University (MSU) Library undertook a major reclassification project in March 1989 to convert 175,000 Dewey Decimal titles into the Library of Congress Classification, the Technical Services staff involved in the planning realized that communicating policies and procedures to all levels of library personnel would require a great deal of effort. The reclass personnel planned library staff meetings and one-to-one discussions to eliminate as many communication problems as possible before the project started. However, once the project was underway, several new issues emerged that had to be dealt with on a daily basis. Finding effective ways of communicating these issues to the library staff has helped the library deal more effectively in handling other issues. Various communication problems will be considered by presenting our analysis with solutions, and suggestions on what can make other reclass projects run smoothly are provided. A diagram of the communication network model and a flow chart of the workflow for the project are appended. (Author/BBM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED333896

What's Up, Doc? Communicating to the Staff about the Reclass Project

by

June Chressanthis

Mitchell Memorial Library
Mississippi State University

The following pages constitute a poster session that was presented at the annual conference of the American Library Association in Chicago on June 23, 1990. The same poster session was presented later in the year at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Library Association in Jackson, Miss., on November 7, 1990.

IR053658

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

June Chressanthis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ABSTRACT

When the MSU Library took on a major reclassification project in March 1989, the Technical Services staff involved in the planning realized that communicating policies and procedures to all levels of library personnel would require a great deal of effort. The reclass personnel planned library staff meetings and one-to-one discussions to eliminate as many communication problems as possible before the project started. However, once the project was underway, several new issues emerged that had to be dealt with on a daily basis. Finding effective ways of communicating these issues to the library staff has helped the library deal more effectively in handling other issues. Various communication problems will be considered by presenting our analysis with solutions. Suggestions on what can make other reclass projects run smoothly will be available.

GOALS

1. Complete the reclassification of the Dewey Decimal collection into the Library of Congress classification system (LC) within 19 months.

2. Incorporate the reclassified materials into the LC collection quickly and with minimal disruptions in library service.

3. Promote and enhance cohesiveness between Technical Services and Public Services.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The MSU Library received money to reclassify 175,000 Dewey Decimal titles into the Library of Congress Classification (LC). The Library wanted all holdings to be in LC to enhance the new online system. After investigating various options, the Library decided to have an outside vender perform the reclassification.

A 19-month contract with the vendor was drawn up to complete the conversion. Staff members from Technical Services were instructed on their respective duties. Public Services librarians were asked to flag any Dewey materials which needed to be withdrawn or sent to Special Collections before an inventory of the collection began.

After the inventory was finished, boxes of shelflist cards were sent to the vendor. When the boxes were returned, they were unpacked and any cards flagged as problems were removed to be resolved in-house. Books were then relabeled and reshelved.

Example 1 and Solution

The Assistant Coordinator mailed boxes of Dewey shelflist cards to the vendor in numerical order. This process worked fine until books were being relabeled and reshelved. The reference librarian discovered that reshelving would be easier if materials could be relabeled in reverse order (ie. high-to-low). This pattern would allow the collection to be shifted backward into the vacated Dewey shelves.

The Technical Services staff was concerned with the processing of the Dewey materials and did not perceive the shelving issue to be important. However, materials are now being processed in reverse order once the Assistant Coordinator listened to the Reference Librarian and understood the importance of the problem.

Example 2 and Solution

Before the inventory phase began, the Assistant Coordinator met with the reference librarians to discuss their part in the project. The purpose of the inventory phase was explained in that materials which were missing or needed to be withdrawn would be marked on the respective Dewey shelflist card. These cards would not be sent to the vendor. If an item was to be withdrawn, we would not want the item to be reclassed. The Public Services staff was asked to flag all books they would like to be withdrawn before the inventory teams came through. The Public Services staff started flagging books, but did not always stay ahead of the inventory teams.

The major reason for this problem was the lack of staff time devoted to this project while helping patrons and performing other daily activities. Perhaps, the reason may be partly because the value placed on flagging the books was not perceived as high as it could have been. This delay resulted in the vendor reclassifying books to be withdrawn.

Example 3 and Solution

The reclass team decided in the beginning of the project that pre-1900 imprints previously not in Special Collections and serials would be reclassed in-house. These books (also any books not matched with a shelflist during the inventory) would remain on the shelves after all other books were reclassified. This decision was communicated with reasons to the reference staff. There seemed to be no problem until books were being relabeled and the collection was shifted. The books left out of the project created "pockets" of Dewey items in the midst of the shifted LC collection.

The reference librarians did not understand why these pockets exist. They were reminded of why some materials were skipped. In addition, some Dewey numbers were sent to the vendor out-of-order and would thus be relabeled out-of-sequence. After several discussions on this unforeseen snafu, the Public Services staff realizes why these pockets of Dewey books exist. See example 4 for further developments on this problem.

Example 4 and Solution

The Public Services staff shift the Dewey and LC collections daily to allow for the expansion into the LC collection. The "pockets" of Dewey books (see example 3) which have been skipped in the relabeling process are placed out-of-sequence in different areas in the stacks. Signs were not placed, nor was the Assistant Coordinator notified, to indicate the various locations of these Dewey books. The Assistant Coordinator must then look in several possible places to locate these books.

Due to the lack of communication initiative on both the Assistant Coordinator and reference librarians, much frustration was incurred on the part of the Assistant Coordinator. After several months into the project and a brief discussion between the Assistant Coordinator and the reference librarian in charge of shifting, it is hoped this problem will be minimized.

SUMMARY

Communication problems can be traced to human and organizational barriers. Human barriers to effective communication may include differences in perceptions and values, poor listening skills, and lack of communication initiative. Individual perceptions and values can hinder any special project. Each individual weighs the importance of his/her involvement in the project against the importance of their daily activities. Each person perceives their contributions to the reclass project from unique viewpoints. Therefore what may be a major problem for the Public Services staff may not be perceived as such by Technical Services.

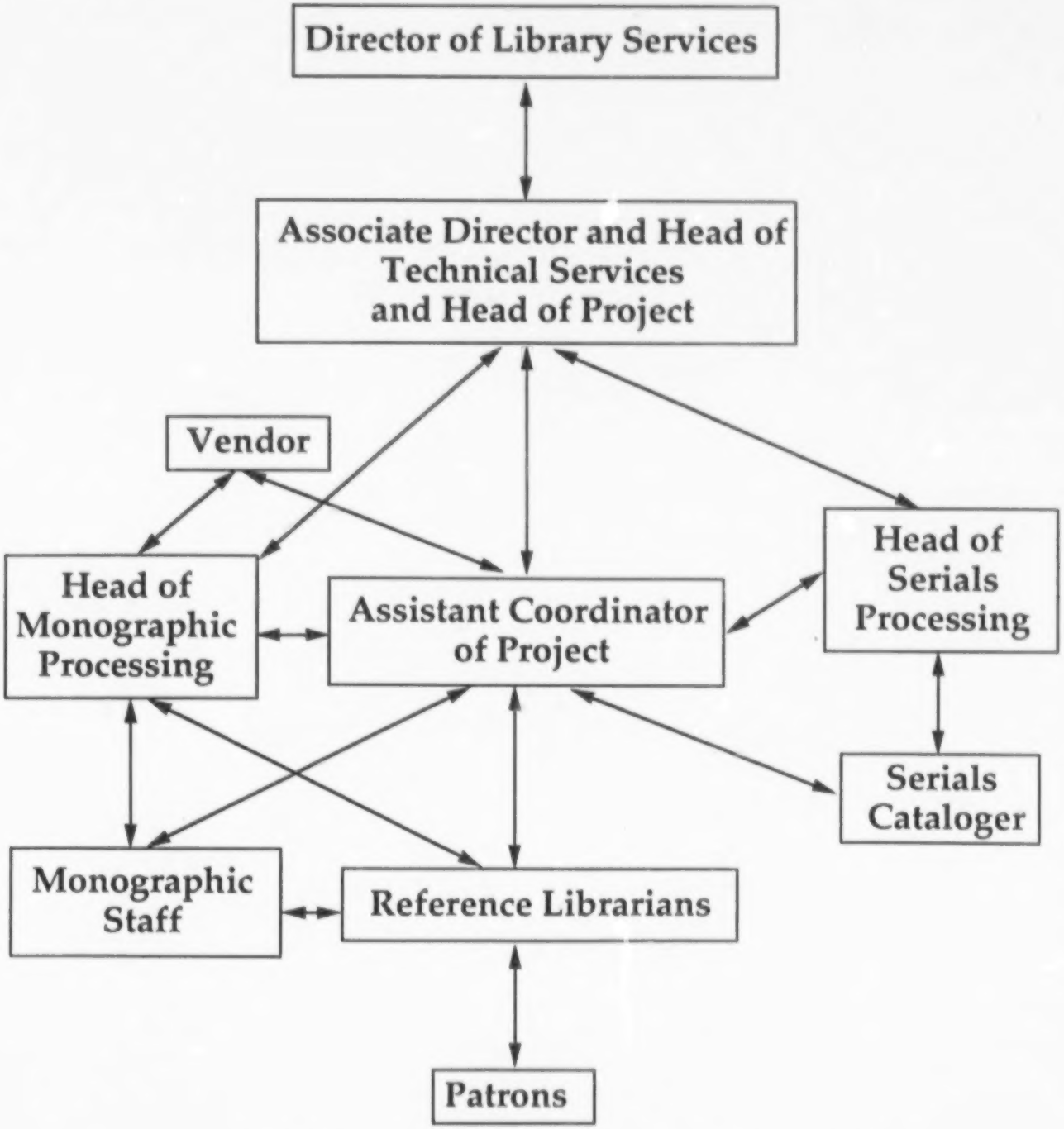
Organizational barriers to effective communication may include the structure of the communication network and the amount of communication activity.

The network structure can inhibit communication if one or two individuals are generating all the information and not receiving any input or feedback. The Assistant Coordinator tries to relay the exact information to each

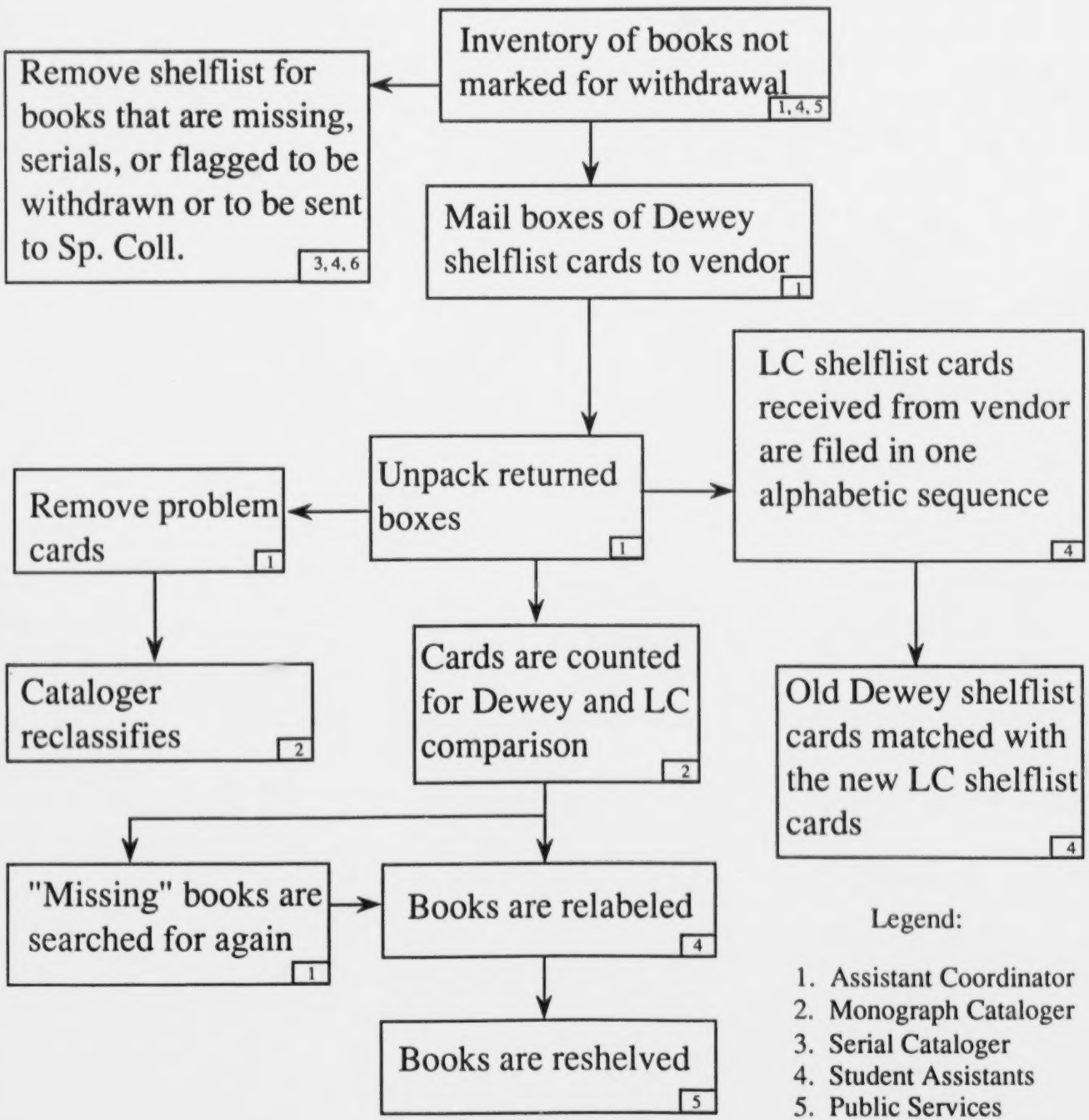
person involved in the project. Keeping each person aware of what is going on throughout the entire network and asking for their input has helped everyone stay interested in the project.

An overabundance of information coming into and out of several "network nodes" (see Communication Network Model) can easily slow up a project. Checking the project status at each phase can be tiring at best. Keeping morale high with so much "need-to-know" information can be difficult. This is especially true when policies and procedures change frequently due to new problems.

COMMUNICATION NETWORK MODEL



WORKFLOW


Inventory of books not marked for withdrawal
1, 4, 5
Remove shelflist for books that are missing, serials, or flagged to be withdrawn or to be sent to Sp. Coll.
3, 4, 6
Mail boxes of Dewey shelflist cards to vendor
1
LC shelflist cards received from vendor are filed in one alphabetic sequence
4
Unpack returned boxes
1
Remove problem cards
1
Cataloger reclassifies
2
Cards are counted for Dewey and LC comparison
2
Old Dewey shelflist cards matched with the new LC shelflist cards
4
"Missing" books are searched for again
1
Books are relabeled
4
Books are reshelved
5

Legend:

1. Assistant Coordinator
2. Monograph Cataloger
3. Serial Cataloger
4. Student Assistants
5. Public Services